

# Closely the role of raleigh essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Throughout the play, 'Journey's End', R. C. Sherriff provides a range of characters portraying different personalities and backgrounds. One of these characters is a boy called Raleigh. The dramatic intention of this character is to symbolise the youth and naivety of the many young officers who died during trench warfare. In addition he is used as a dramatic tool to reveal emotions and create tension.

The clearest and more obvious role of Raleigh is to symbolise youth. Even before Raleigh arrives at the front line the officer, Hardy, is willing to welcome a young officer, '... youngster straight from school.

They're the kind that do best. ' In this phrase, R. C. Sherriff is implying that new young officers are eager, with few responsibilities and do not know much at all about the war. Raleigh is a symbol for the many young men who were brainwashed in schools with propaganda in order to try to encourage them to join the army. As the play advances there are clear signs of these traits in Raleigh.

For example when he arrives in the trenches, he is offered some whisky from Osborne, ' Will you have a drink? but Raleigh replies, ' Er- well'. From this reply it is obvious that Raleigh has never drunken whisky due to his uncertainty and unclear response. To many of the older men in the trenches it was a part of everyday life, as if they were drinking water, and this incident in turn exaggerates Raleigh's inexperience and youthful mind. Then, just to emphasise his youth, Raleigh says, '..

. I only left school at the end of last summer term'. Furthermore, throughout the play there are clear signs of Raleigh's symbolic naive role as well as his

dramatic role in the play. In the early scenes with Osborne, as the full extent of Raleigh's naivety is revealed, we tremble to think what will happen when Raleigh comes face to face with the hard, nerve-shattered Stanhope. The conversations with Osborne are the calm before the storm when the young Raleigh meets Stanhope. For example, Raleigh tells Osborne about the ironic event of how he became stationed here.

Firstly Raleigh tells Osborne about how he knows Stanhope. However Raleigh is unaware that Stanhope has become an alcoholic, even though Osborne has dropped hints into the conversation to try to put this message across. This yet again portrays Raleigh's naive role in the play. Afterwards, Raleigh talks about his uncle, a General back in England, who assigns officers to regiments. Then Raleigh is foolish enough to say, ' I went to see him on the quiet and asked him if he could get me into this battalion.

.. - and next day I was told I was coming to this battalion. Funny, wasn't it? ' Even Stanhope says ' Extraordinary coincidence! ' Nepotism has clearly been shown towards Raleigh and it is obvious that his uncle meant to send him to the front line where Stanhope was stationed. During this exchange of words not only is Raleigh's symbolic role as a decent but naive youth revealed but we also feel a sense of dramatic tension being built up so he has a role as a catalyst in a dramatic sense.

At the end of the play Raleigh dies. This is not only ironic as he has been in the trenches for only three days, but it also shows wasted life and opportunity. In my opinion, the writer, R. C Sherriff has written this event in

order to show the true reality of war. Many young men would have died in trench warfare, some no older than sixteen.

In turn, we can see that the role of Raleigh in 'Journey's End' is to symbolise the tragic truth of war and highlight the youth of some of the men. In many aspects we do not realise the youth of Raleigh until he dies, which causes us to think about how his life was thrown away and how many more years he could have had if his eagerness and naivety had not brought him to this point. However, Raleigh is not just a symbol of youth, naivety and wasted opportunity; he also has a very important dramatic impact. For example, without him the decline of Stanhope would be unclear and not happen as quickly.

From the point he arrives, tension builds up until both Stanhope and Raleigh meet, 'Hullo, Stanhope'... 'How did you - get here?'

Stanhope is obviously shocked and has not even politely greeted him. His response is blunt and even though there is a sense of an anti-climax up to this point it leaves a lingering tension in the atmosphere and causes us to think about what must be going through Stanhope's mind. Raleigh is also used to show the changes in attitude towards war. He arrives at the trenches eager and ready to fight as if the whole war were a game.

However, eventually he experiences the reality of war after Osborne dies. In turn Stanhope is given a sense that life is ruined even though he tries to block out his emotions by drinking more. Furthermore we are given the impression that it was Raleigh's fault until the end of the play when Stanhope's true emotions are uncovered when Raleigh is dying after being

hit by a piece of shrapnel in the trenches. Overall, it is possible to see that Raleigh has various roles throughout the play. He is not only a symbol of youth but he also fulfils the role of the naive inexperienced character whom we all pity, like the many young men who did die during the war. Furthermore he also has a dramatic impact acting as a catalyst to reveal the true emotions of others and to create a build up of tension that ties in with the build up to the big raid at the end.